

Allan Harman, *Matthew Henry: His Life and Influence*, Christian Focus Publications (Ferne: Scotland), 2012, ISBN – 978-184550783-1.

Harman's hagiography of Henry's life deserves to be described just as such because, as the author clearly demonstrates, Matthew Henry was a holy man. So while volumes too glowing of their subjects are roundly criticized and usually rightly, there's so little to find fault with in the life of Matthew Henry, the exemplary Puritan, that Harman really can offer nothing less.

Naturally it hardly need be said that Matthew Henry's most enduring work, his Commentary on the Bible, has been surpassed and long since left behind. It remains interesting today not so much for what it teaches us about the Bible and its message and content, but rather as a pleasant devotional guide for a simple devotional reading of the Bible.

To be sure, there's nothing at all wrong with a devotional reading of Scripture but as is nearly always the case in such writings, we learn much more about the piety of the devotionalist than we do about the text. Matthew Henry's commentary is a stellar example of that fact.

Thankfully, in Harman's work, we learn that Matthew Henry was much more than a commentator of the Puritan mindset. We learn his family history, their struggles and trials during a period of serious persecution and religious repression in Britain, and about M.H.'s studies in London and his calling to Chester (a fantastically beautiful town even now, stuffed to the brim with lovely architecture and pleasant people) and fairly long ministry there. We also hear tales of Henry's experiences in Hackney and his death.

Those topics comprising the first ten chapters, Harman spends the last four analyzing Matthew Henry as Preacher, Commentator, Writer, and the abiding impact of Henry's efforts.

The point is made, and I think justifiably, that Matthew Henry has been and even in some respects remains one of Britain's most enduring theologians. His work touched the lives of countless exceptionally important biblical scholars and theologians along with untold multitudes of pew occupying pious believers. I'll even admit and confess

that his methodological approach to the commentary is the very approach I have adopted in my own work: simple explanations offered for the entire biblical collection aimed at average Christians with real desires to know the book they call the Bible.

In all, I found Harman's book just absolutely delightful. I have no doubt at all that others will pick it up and yearn ever so slightly to be just a bit more pious, a bit more faithful, a bit more patient, a bit more hopeful, and a bit more graceful in their own lives. Those, after all, are the chief attributes of Matthew Henry.

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